

WILLIAM A. LITTLE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT  
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HARLEY BIRD  
BUSINESS MANAGER, CENTRAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION  
BUSINESS MANAGER, UNITED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ASSOCIATION

**INTERVIEWEE:** HARLEY BIRD

**INTERVIEWERS:** WILLIAM LITTLE

**SUBJECTS:** CENTRAL CONTRACTORS ASSOCIATION, UNITED CONSTRUCTION WORKERS ASSOCIATION, RACISM, TYREE SCOTT, MODEL CITIES

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[00:00:00] **HARLEY BIRD:** The organization where, in the timeline—

[00:00:005] **WILLIAM LITTLE:** [?The coming of?]. Until you terminate your involvement with the organization?

[00:00:08] **HARLEY:** Well, my involvement, as well as Tyree's, evolved out of our involvement with the Central Contractors Association in 1969, the early part of 1969. I met Tyree through a friend of mine, [inaudible] \_\_\_\_\_. I was working at Boeing at the time. I had began to feel the ineptness of what I was doing at Boeing, and in my life and lifestyle, et cetera. I started going to community meetings and getting involved in community affairs and that sort of thing. Subsequently, I attended a large number or quite a few community

meetings, a lot of which were Central Contractors Association meetings. At that time, the primary issue was minority involvement in the construction industry and the trades.

As a result of going to those meetings and meeting Tyree and getting involved in the organization, I left Boeing and went to work for the Central Contractors Association as a business manager. Tyree at the time was Chairman of the Board or Director or something. He had played the primary role in organizing the Central Contractors Association. We had the age-old problem, then again, as the progress, or lack of progress you might say, of minority contractors in dealing with the problems that they perceived that they had were not in the best interest of the minority worker. We still go back to the old question of management and labor situations: the problems that minority contractors had bonding, getting jobs and contracts, getting involved in learning the technical aspects of capitalism, period. We weren't into that at that time.

The central issue at the time at that time, as we perceived it, and the problem being employment for minorities in the community, youth as well as older Blacks. The unemployment rate was tremendous, approximately 45 to 50% at the time. A large percentage of young Black males at the age of 27, 28 had never had a job of any kind. Anyway, to kind of sum that up: because of those differences of ideology, at that juncture, and I guess because also of the time, 1969, and the newness and the attention that the whole issue brought upon the Central Contractors Association, and the personalities involved, and the lack of sophistication by some of the minority contractors, I think had a great deal to do with both my leaving and Tyree Scott's leaving the Central Contractors Association. We can go into more detail, expound on those points.

After that time, there was a considerable amount of effort and energy expended by a lot of people, not just Tyree or myself, or Michael Ross, but a lot of people that really believed in what we were trying to do, and that was to improve employment opportunities for Blacks in a very high paying trade, the construction industry. We saw a need to develop an organization around facilitating that effort, continuing that effort that was started under the guise of the organizational banners of the Central Contractors Association.

In September of '70, we started—Actually, it was in the Summer of '70, this was after or during the time of the successful litigation was brought against four of the building trades. A number of people were named in that court order, Black journeymen who were not members of the labor unions. Those people were contacted, and organizational effort was put forth to organize those people into a group of people, into an organization that could facilitate their needs and desires essentially. The organization became the United Construction Workers Association. The primary interest and the motive was simply not jobs for jobs sake, but an educational process at the same time, you know, to educate and try to instill other kinds of meanings into the organization rather than a job for jobs sake.

We weren't interested in becoming a service-oriented organization. At the time there were lots of them. Seattle Model Cities Program was in full swing, there were concentrated employment programs set up, et cetera, that provided those kind of social-oriented services, to get a person a job, to get a person's transportation to a job, get a person's tools for the job, essentially do everything for the person which would facilitate his employment. We were interested. We knew that we had to do those kinds of things, but at the same time, the objective was to educate those workers as to why they were in the condition they were in, and to teach them something about the system and how it worked, and why it was what it was, and to try to start a basis of some kind of more permanent kinds of changes, more permanent kinds of attitude changes that we could deal with the problem in its entirety as we perceived it at the time. At the same time, we went through a growth process. We learned a great deal about the kinds of things we could do and couldn't do with respect to organization of the community.

One of the main lessons I think, now that I look back over it, is that those essential services, as an organization tool, has to be provided. In other words, you can talk about the philosophy of the system of capitalism, the whys, the wherefores, et cetera, but if a guy is hungry, doesn't have a job, he's got a family to feed and a light bill to pay and shoes to buy for his kids, it falls on deaf ears. So it was necessary to provide jobs and employment opportunities and to continue to keep those people working. Also, to change some attitudes in the white community, attitudes that were prevalent not only in Seattle but across the country. There were many, many Title VII cases brought against companies and industries and the relief was never effectuated. The cases were won. A year after the cases were won nobody went to work, there was no enforcement mechanism by which court orders were enforced. Therefore, making the whole ordeal of going through a lengthy trial process, making it nothing, the end results being worth nothing. So, we saw that the organization was based around 8618, a lawsuit brought by justice.

The interest that the organization had in the community was around jobs, and around those kinds of services that the organization could provide. At the same time, we didn't perpetuate the kind of poverty crapping attitude that was existing in other poverty programs. You know, white shirt and tie, executive director, the whole concept of a designed poverty program. People that were employed at the United Construction Workers were people that worked at one time or another in the trades. They were guys that you might say, come up through the ranks. guys that felt the need to bring about some change, and people really understood what it meant to be unemployed and Black in the community. The selection criteria was not based upon one's degree, or lack of degree, from a college or university, or a high school, as far as that goes, but his ability to be able to communicate and deal effectively with the concerns and interests of the workers that he was representing. That's the thing that I like most about the United Construction Workers.

The glamour aspects of job closures and demonstrations, et cetera, press conferences and the like, was really basically an organizational tool. We used to have a saying that jobs and discrimination was just a means by which to organize. Nobody's sole objective in life should be to get a job. If we could all live at a decent standard of living without working, of course that would be ideal, but that's not possible. Employment discrimination in jobs were a means by which we could organize the people in the community. We did other things other than work around simply the job issue. We tried to deal with other kinds of issues that affected the community, other kinds of issues that affected workers from an organizational standpoint. So ask me some questions about—Because I might go off—

[00:12:09] **WILLIAM:** You doing fine. Weren't you there when they initially started to—No. I don't think that's an appropriate question. Let me go back further. Do you know anything about the types of intercommunity that evolved during that period of time, early '69, when you first started to shut down jobs, the airport, the county building, these other places, how the other elements of the community reacted. Let me be a little more specific in that. Let's talk primarily about Keve Bray and the Black House group.

[00:13:00] **HARLEY:** Ok. In the sixties, the Black community was entrenched in the whole poverty crapping institution, the whole Model Cities concepts, social oriented kinds of programs that were going to come into the Black community and deal effectively with all the problems of the Black community within the Black community. Essentially, no external pressures were being placed on the white community that perpetuated the kinds of problems we had. So we had a situation where, all of a sudden, from nowhere, we had money dumped into the community.

A lot of attention was directed toward the Black community. At the same time, there were a lot of people in the community that were intellectually capable of taking advantage of the situation and perpetuating their own self

interest and their own philosophy. I'm not saying right or wrong, but at the expense of, I'd say, the community at large, it was, as I perceived it, as almost being a situation where certain people felt that they were who they were and therefore were entitled to a monarchy type of role in the community dealing with all kinds of issues.

[00:14:48] **WILLIAM:** What type of term did you say?

[00:14:51] **HARLEY:** Monarch. Royalty.

[00:14:55] **WILLIAM:** Ok. I understand.

[00:14:58] **HARLEY:** And it wasn't just Keve Bray and that group, or a few minority contractors, it was also the Black clergy, for example, who traditionally have been looked upon by the white community as the leaders of the Black community. For what reasons? No matter what the issue was, they were the people that the white community came and got their opinions as to what to do or what not to do, et cetera. They were always thrown in the leadership kind of role. The same kind of thing existed in our situation with the Black clergy until the lines were established as to what areas they were to be involved in and what areas we were to be involved in. The situation with Keve Bray and that whole philosophy that they had, that organization, I think was really based on that Keith was an intelligent individual in many respects. In a lot of respects he wasn't. I think he had a few mental problems, as did some of his captains and his lieutenants.

At any rate, they felt that anything that dealt with the Black community and the decision making process, especially the things attributed to press coverage, the various superficial kind of visual—How do you say it—Credible or whatever you want to call it. They were the ones who were deserving of that and no one else, period, and that they knew what was best, whether it was for Black construction workers, or cab drivers, or restaurant owners, or whoever.

At the time, they had a newspaper, and every week they would come down very hard on some Black in the community as they perceived to be the problem. Then, they even tag them with names such as Mac the Knife with respect to Reverend McKinney. I think it was an exercise of mental masturbation within the community itself perpetuating on the blood of other Blacks and the problem itself rather than addressing the real problem at the heart. We had the same situation develop, and one of the major reasons why it was real apparent that the separation had to be made between the efforts of organizing minority workers and minority contractors because the interests of both couldn't be served.

The Central Contractors Association had been attempting to get a Model Cities grant. There was money set aside in the Model Cities Program for the development of minority contractors and minority business enterprise programs. But Walter Hundley, coming from the streets more or less, had a very good feel for what went on, and he knew the characters involved in almost every aspect, because he did come up, and the personalities, and basically what their intent was, and where their interests lie. So he was very cautious in giving up money to the Central Contractors Association as it was constituted without certain kinds of safeguards to make sure that certain individuals wouldn't take advantage of it. They would reap all the benefits where the majority of the minority contractors wouldn't get anything.

One aspect of the program was that we signed the contract with Model Cities. On a Sunday afternoon we had a meeting with Walt Hundley in Model Cities' Office. Walt Hundley instructed everybody, the Board of Directors of the Central Contractors Association, myself, and Tyree, that if there was any change in the leadership of the organization that he would suspend the contract. At the time, it was a revolving fund of about \$100,000 for

loans to contractors as well as administrative money to hire accountants, estimators, engineers and that kind of thing to provide the technical assistance to minority contractors where they didn't have it before.

Before we could even get the process, committees and everything established to set up to disperse the funds, we had a request from one minority contractor for a loan of about \$1700 or something. The reason why he wanted the loan was because his truck had got repossessed. That may or may not be a legitimate request, however, the funds were set up to facilitate minority contractors' payroll, buying supplies, meeting payrolls on particular contracts that they had, not to purchase equipment or pay for equipment that they had neglected to make payments on. Really, that was probably the reason why we left, Tyree left and I, the Central Contractors Association, because that particular contractor went out and talked to a couple of other contractors who had the same self interests, they were motivated basically in the self-interest kind of way, as well as some of his workers.

They came to the meeting that night. In the meantime, the contractor did have a contract, and we had worked out a situation where the payments that he received from his contract would come to repay the loan. In other words, we worked out a situation where he could get the loan, because he did have a substantial contract at that time with the Safeway store, a remodeling contract, and he was performing on the project, but he didn't have any way of knowing that. This happened between the time he left and the time he came to the meeting that night when the decision was supposed to have been made. So he had already went down and done his lobbying, et cetera, and came back determined to kick somebody's ass. Mainly mine and Tyree's.

When he came in, it was really funny, and he saw that the papers were prepared and everything, but it was too late to stop him. As a result, Tyree and myself got beat up and held at gunpoint. It was just an ugly situation. I carried a gun for about two weeks thereafter. It was really ridiculous. On top of all the other threats and the other kinds of pressures that we were getting from the white community, we had to also deal with that. The terrible kind of bullshit. We decided at that point that a separation was necessary. That we couldn't do anything else to facilitate the kind of program we were looking at within the Central Contractors Association. So we left. The both of us.

[00:23:08] **WILLIAM:** So in other words, you didn't get put out, you just resigned?

[00:23:11] **HARLEY:** Right. I stayed on for a couple of months later, simply because we didn't want the money to be dropped from Model Cities because there were a lot of contractors who needed their services, and we're hard-working, honest contractors who weren't looking to rip off.

Finally, a deal was worked out with Urban League where they set up a contractors assistance center. Urban League performed the role that essentially Tyree and I did before: trying to keep the thieves away, you know, give the money to the people who were really trying—

[00:23:52] **WILLIAM:** So in other words, you had a control factor outside of the organization in order to maintain the organization.

[00:23:55] **HARLEY:** After we left. Prior to that time, the organization itself, the Central Contractors Association, the Board of Directors, made those kinds of decisions. There were individuals involved, and you probably know who they are—

[00:24:10] **WILLIAM:** No, I don't know who they are. I was in Western Washington State College when all this occurred.

[00:24:15] **HARLEY:** Well, there were guys, some of which are still operating in the community now, most of which are not. One guy is dead, two of them are dead, one guy got killed by his wife, the woman he used to beat. He was one of the main ones. Matter of fact he came into the office one day and asked me to draw. He pulled his coat back and he had his gun. It was ridiculous. The whole thing was really a trip.

By this time we had successfully—We had done some things in Seattle which had never been done anywhere else in the country. We had successfully closed down and stopped construction on almost \$200,000,000 worth of construction projects, including the Sea-Tac Airport. We had forced, essentially force the Department of Justice to come in here and pick up the litigation that we had initially filed through Lem Howell, who was the representative at the time. But we didn't have the money and resources to continue that kind of a litigation effort against four major building trades unions. We literally forced them, the Justice Department, to come in because of the chaos that we'd created here in Seattle, and the suit was litigated successfully and it's still perpetuating as a result of that and the subsequent actions by the United Construction Workers to keep the pressure on and keep enforcement going on, perpetuating enforcement by the courts. There's over 500 Blacks working those trades today.

[00:26:04] **WILLIAM:** Ok. Let me back up, and let's identify exactly who was the forces that perpetuate this type of violence that you just aptly described. Was it part of the Bray group or was it part of another group in the CAA [Contractors Assistance Association]?

[00:26:19] **HARLEY:** Ok. It was really a big, complicated network of bullshit. It was Keve Bray and his group. There were some contractors, four or five contractors, one of which is a contractor today. Let me give you an example. During the course of all these demonstrations, we would have a demonstration and a meeting, demonstration and a meeting. This is over about a two week period of time. By the time the thing had peaked, 200 people or 100 people got arrested. There were four or five hundred people at the demonstration at the University of Washington, for example. Bulldozer went over the cliff, we made *Huntley-Brinkley* and all that national news and stuff. We probably had over a thousand people that were coming to the meetings during that time. The press was all around. That was the first time that that kind of thing had happened in Seattle. In our time period, let me put it that way. Twenty-year, thirty-year period of time.

It was new, and all the attention and the reporters and the newspapers, the TV interviews, and all this shit daily. That alone is a superstarism kind of situation, and the white press has a very unique method by which to do that. They select people out, and make them go one way or the other. They couldn't go against us because they knew we were right. The statistics were there. There weren't any minorities in there working. There was federal money involved in the projects, there weren't no minorities employed on the jobs, period. The law says that there was supposed to be. The unemployment rate was tremendous in the Black community. None of those facts could be argued, disputed at all. As far as the violence was concerned, on the closing down of the construction projects and that whole mess, it couldn't be criticized that much either simply because we had been to court and these unions were found guilty of discrimination and were ordered to take in Blacks. So it wasn't a situation where they could say, "Well, you can in fact go to court and get this problem resolved." We did that, and it still wasn't resolved.

At the same time, we got all this poverty crapping money and whatever else. Say, Keve Bray, look at

his group. Black Panthers were starting to struggle up at that time, and they were probably at their peak at that time. They were just getting underway and stuff. Then there was some contractors, four or five contractors. Hank Roney was one that was the leader of one particular element of the contractors,

[00:29:40] **WILLIAM:** Would it be fair to say that Hank Roney was the leadership of that group?

[00:29:46] **HARLEY:** I think it would be fair to say that he was the leadership. He was the leadership and the dissenting view, the minority of dissenting view of the minority contractors. It was really funny. The situation developed that during this very heated time when we were having these meetings, at one particular meeting Hank Roney had decided that he was going to take over the leadership of the whole movement, period. Keve Bray's organization heard about it, or whatever else. At the time, there was an individual, we used to call him the Bone Crusher, and he was connected with Keve Bray. The other guy's a Muslim now, and he was working for the public defender. He was working at the—

[00:37:07] **WILLIAM:** You're talking about Minister George?

[00:31:09] **HARLEY:** No, not George.

[00:31:10] **WILLIAM:** Or are you talking about the other kid? His name is—

[00:31:12] **HARLEY:** Yeah, the younger one. David.

[00:31:12] **WILLIAM:** Dave Mills.

[00:31:14] **HARLEY:** Dave Mills, ok. I don't know exactly how they got wind of it, or what the situation was, or if it was a power struggle between the two, but Dave Mills was interested in taking the thing over, as we heard. He was going to take it over, and Keve Bray was— I mean Roney was going to take it over. So, I guess they had to decide among themselves. They had to settle that issue before they take on us, right?

So, the meeting had started, this particular meeting, and there was a lot of people there, five or six hundred people. The next thing we knew somebody said there was someone hurt outside, so we went outside. The Bone Crusher had beat Hank Roney's ass something terrible. I mean it was much, much, much worse than the ass whooping Ali gave Frazer, or Foreman gave Frazer. I mean it was awful. He beat him underneath the car, and he had two bodyguards. The ideology behind this whole thing—I mean the whole thing was so ridiculous, man. He was walking around with guns and with bodyguards. It was really a trip. I mean, they was really tripping, you know? They told Hank Roney not to come back to the community. Hank Roney didn't come back into the Central Area. I didn't see him in the Central Area in the day or night for about three years. They beat him that bad. He went over to Bellevue and he stayed over in Bellevue.

Now, they did some other things, with respect to Dave Mills. They sent the Bone Crusher up to a meeting that the board was having at Lem Howell's office to tell them that couldn't no decisions be made. The Bone Crusher came to tell them that no decisions could be made by nobody but Dave Mills, and the Black United Front was going to take over and call all the shots. So, Lem Howell threw him out of the office. This guy was big. I'd say that when they called him the Bone Crusher they weren't—

[00:33:36] **WILLIAM:** What was his real name? Earl what?

[00:33:39] **HARLEY:** I can't think of his real name now, man. He's still around here, too. He later became a Muslim. He became very docile and quiet and didn't bother nobody. Obviously, he had a mental problem. Psychologically he was really kind of fucked up, as was Keve Bray. Keve Bray was fired from a job for child molesting [inaudible] \_\_\_\_\_. He was kind of queer, I guess. Later he got killed in Denver. Milton Dixon got shot by his wife.

[00:34:17] **WILLIAM:** Who?

[00:34:18] **HARLEY:** Milton Dixon. He was another explosively hardcore militant. It's really strange that the ones that were supposed to be the bad actors in the extreme militancy, the ones that would shoot a nigga at the drop of a hat, or jump on somebody, never, never, in any situation, inflicted any kind of physical violence toward any white people at all during this whole period of time. All of the shit that they pulled was against Black people in the Black community, verbal as well as physical abuse. Many, many demonstrations that we had, they were never involved in the actual fisticuffs with the police, or the construction workers, or anybody else.

At one demonstration that we had at the University of Washington, where a number of people were arrested by the police, I was arrested, and the demonstration was over and the crowd essentially came off the campus and was standing on the sidewalks around where now is located the Office of Minority Affairs in that building. The police couldn't do anything. The demonstration was over, but they really couldn't arrest anybody because they didn't see anybody do anything because everything that was done was on the campus. Then, they had about seven or eight hundred policemen out there, and I guess out of frustration they just decided that they were just going to start kicking ass. They started waving their clubs into the crowd arbitrarily, and fights broke out, et cetera.

I was trying to get my wife away from the scene. We were trying to move the crowd back away from the police and everything. About three policemen grabbed me, and, at this time in the bushes was three of the toughest militants hiding in the bushes right next to me as the three policemen was kicking my ass. Later on, they said, "Well we was there, and we had these guns, but we were scared. We didn't want to get busted or some shit." But that was always the situation. So, it was a lot of that interaction.

Finally, though, as—This is another interesting part about it. For the most part, with the exception of, say, Hank Roney, L. B. Curry, and a couple of other guys, they kind of settled down and became what they professed to be in the first place, which was businessmen.

The things that I'm saying about Hank Roney, and L. B. Curry and stuff are my own personal views and I really don't want you to—

[00:37:22] **WILLIAM:** To quote it?

[00:37:23] **HARLEY:** To quote me, to say that it came from me, et cetera, because I work with them. They're contractors now. We have a pretty good relationship, and they're doing pretty good business now.

But anyway, at the time, most of the people—Well, okay, like now. The contractors that were the hiring working contractors were interested in developing businesses and becoming successful minority contractors, were successful minority contractors at the level that they could obtain success at that time, and they're more successful now as a result of the gains that have been made along those areas. The ones that weren't contractors,



that were bullshitting and trying to rip off, et cetera, they're gone. They fell by the wayside, and they're gone. They're out of the picture, and don't exist for the most part no more.

There was a separation probably shortly thereafter, probably within a year or so thereafter, and a kind of mutual respect developed within the community among various power groups, which included the Urban League-type of groups, the NAACP [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People], Black ministers, United Construction Workers, and the Central Contractors Association. It was a kind of a mutual truce, or understanding that everybody had their own areas to deal with. When the press or anyone would go to one of the other groups, they would direct them to the person or persons that had that area of responsibility. It worked out pretty well thereafter, that whole era of community organization in that sense. My goodness, it was really, really, really a trip. You wonder why.

Here we were—Tyree at the time was working for Scott's Electric. He was not a partner. He was working for his dad, essentially in a management role in the business. He was getting \$150 a week. I had quit my job at Boeing, I'd been there for six and a half years. I'd been to management school. I'd been in management. Essentially, if anybody had any job security at Boeing, I had it, if any such thing exists at the Boeing Company. I lived in Rainier Valley with a wife and family to support. I left because I wanted to do something to improve conditions in the minority community, not for money or anything else. It just so happens that I didn't have to go hungry as a result of working for the Central Contractors Association, Model Cities contract.

Later, about three months I worked for the city of Seattle in the Human Rights Department, knowing it was just a stop-gap situation until the UCWA [United Construction Workers Association] could receive funding. Here we were, essentially working 16-, 17-, 18-hour days. I remember times when we would leave at 7:00 in the morning and wouldn't get home until 12:00 or 1:00 at night. There was a lot of things that we had to do, besides the normal course of dealing with the everyday kind of problems and dealing with the things we had to do during the course of an 8-hour day. We also had a great deal of communication kinds of things that we had to do and disseminate information. Even though— I mean, because labor unions and the whole thing, they were perpetuating racism in the papers and propaganda and that kind of thing.

We accepted almost all the invitations to community groups and organizations throughout the city. We'd go out and talk to them. PTA [Parent Teacher Association] groups, church organizations, you name it, we went just to tell why we were doing what we were doing and the reasons for it. This consumed a hell of a lot of time, a hell of a lot of time, and we did it. We continued to do it through that whole period of time, but it was an experience. I wouldn't trade it for nothing in the world.

[00:42:18] **WILLIAM:** Ok. Let's back up and go back to the ministers, I've saved that for the end. I'm interested in how did they, as a group, relate to the CCA [Central Contractors Association] in the initial point, at the leadership part?

Let me go back again and specify, at least clarify, what I'm talking about. You mentioned that, at the early part of our conversation, that the white community looked upon the ministers as the bona fide leaders for the community for every area, and the CCA had to carve out a role for it self in terms of dealing with the ministers and the white power structure. Now, could you discuss that somewhat? How did that come about?

[00:43:21] **HARLEY:** Ok. For an example, the Department of Labor had instituted the Hometown Plan concept.

[00:43:34] **WILLIAM:** The Philadelphia Plan?

[00:43:35] **HARLEY:** No. The Philadelphia Plan is an imposed plan with goals and timetables imposed. The voluntary Hometown Plan was the second phase and that of course—Well, they started out with a voluntary plan, and then they had to go to the imposed plan. The imposed plan is what is termed the Philadelphia Plan, but the voluntary plan was a plan that the Department of Labor says, “Ok, we think that the minority community management in the construction industry and the labor can all sit down at a table and come to a—Reasonable people can work these problems out, and work up these plans, and put these plans into effect. Essentially, we’re going to eliminate the problems of employment discrimination in the construction industry,” which was totally ridiculous. Totally ridiculous. Those plans had a 100% failure rate. They still have a 100% failure rate today, the ones that are still in existence.

Now, obviously, it was to the benefit of labor and management anytime that they could install one of those kinds of plans in a particular area simply because once a plan was effectuated in an area, and the Department of Labor had accepted the plan, the enforcement capabilities of the federal agencies to enforce the guidelines of Executive Order 11246 was taken away. Which means that contractor, by his virtue of being a member of Associated General Contractors or by him having a labor agreement with a union that is a signatory to a voluntary Hometown Plan, was deemed in compliance with Executive Order 11246. Whether or not he employed any minorities or not, he was, in effect, in compliance. In other words, in building that building that was funded by HUD [United States Department of Housing and Urban Development], and I was a contractor, and I was signatory to the Hometown Plan, which says we’re going to take in 100 people in 10 crafts over the next two years, that’s our goal. Then, I’m in compliance and I don’t have nobody working on that particular project. No federal agency can withhold my progress payments or suspend my contract or anything else.

Well, obviously not to the benefit—That certainly wasn’t our benefit here because we had a court order that forced the unions to accept people. Our problem at that point was to get those people out on jobs and keep them people employed. The Executive Order 11246 was a primary tool that we had to make sure that those people that we forced the unions to take would, in fact, get out on jobs. We had the court order there too, right? We look up one day, and Austin St. Laurent, who was secretary of the Building Trades Council, was meeting with the Black clergy. Supposedly in a neutral location, which was over there on 10th Ave., which is some ministry—

[00:46:54] **WILLIAM:** I know what you’re talking about, Economical Council.

[00:46:59] **HARLEY:** Yeah, Economical Council. Here we had Reverend McKinney, and several other Black ministers. Here they were talking about instituting this Hometown Plan, and the clergy didn’t know anything. All they knew was what they had read in the paper and their particular knowledge about the construction industry. They knew, at the same time, that we were the ones that were dealing with the problem, but, again, they were selected by the white community to discuss this whole issue. When we found out about it, we went to the meeting. We told everybody, including the labor unions and the Black clergy, that nobody was going to make those kinds of decisions for the Black workers in the community. After that, to talk to and explain to them why we were taking that position.

[00:48:05] **WILLIAM:** So you met with the ministers after that meeting?

[ 00:48:08] **HARLEY:** Of course. Later they became very supportive of us in whatever ways that they could be supportive of us. They would make announcements during church about the meetings, and encourage their congregations to attend. They were very helpful and involved. They were real helpful. Like we organized a

fundraising kind of event, and Dick Gregory came out and was in charge of some things and was a guest speaker. We marched, it was a kind of a march kind of thing from all the churches down to the center. It was very successful. So I guess it helped, it worked out, the separation of powers.

[00:49:25] **WILLIAM:** Ok. Let's get on another point because I'm interested—I think there's some information I need on somebody else. What occurred between you and Tyree when you guys split up at some point in time? In terms of when you worked in the organization?

[00:49:43] **HARLEY:** Oh, no. Tyree had a—Well, just let me give you my opinion of Tyree. Tyree's a very unique individual. I feel like I was fortunate in having the opportunity of meeting him as well as working with him over the years. I think that he is a person that's endowed with the kind of leadership abilities and the foresight to accomplish goals and objectives than anybody else that I've known, anyone I've ever known in my life, in my own particular life. We became not only just coworkers, but very good friends. He wanted to go on to do the same kind of work in other parts of the country, as the need was there as well.

He went to Denver. He more or less wanted me to become—not become Tyree Scott—but in that kind of leadership role. And I didn't feel that I was capable, like I previously discussed when you first came in, about the director. I didn't have any desires of being placed in that kind of role because I've seen—I've been there and I've seen the kind of things that he was put through. Not by the white people, but just the total thing in itself, the burden, the responsibility, et cetera, and I wasn't interested in doing that. I felt that my best, my better role was one of to complement and help and assist and provide that kind of assistance rather than—Plus, I didn't possess the qualities that he possessed in charisma, or whatever you want to call it, so I always took a second seat to that. When he left and went to Denver for a while, Milton Jefferson became the director, and I assisted him in the same way that I had assisted Tyree. We had expanded the organization into kind of a local. We had one in Oakland, one in Denver, and a board of directors made up of representatives from each group, the local groups. I assisted Milton in the same way that I did Tyree, and he stayed in that position about a year and then he left, went on into business. He was very good, and did a lot of good things.

The reason why I left UCWA—I guess we can get into that point. Last year, at this time, I'd been there and involved in that aspect of the problem since 1969. I was there from the very beginning to when it peaked until you might say it declined. I worked in Denver, I did some work in the South, in Oakland in the community organization that we had there, as well as in Portland. Things slowed down, not because of UCWA, but in spite of UCWA. I felt it was really some time for some new blood. Plus the fact that during this entire time, there was always a struggle for funds, as I've previously indicated. There was always a struggle for money, to meet the payrolls. Sometimes we'd go two or three months without getting paid, but we always got paid. We geared our lifestyles to that. We made those necessary sacrifices that were necessary to make. Didn't nobody starve to death or go bankrupt.

So, the money wasn't really a problem, but all the things combined—When I look back over it, all the things—When I say all the things I mean the sacrifices you make over an extended period of time. You're aware of those, you've been going to school all this time. I'm unclear if you've got a family. If you don't, you can find out if you have to go for a long time, a period of four or five years, really not knowing about next month only dealing with this month. I used to always say that I never planned my life out more than three months in advance, cause, shit, I didn't know three months in advance what was going to happen. All those things—family, the stage in which the organization had come at that point, the fact that I'd been there for a long time, and the fact that the money was really not very much money at that time. I knew that I had the capability of going someplace else and doing something else. There was money there enough to carry some of the staff to

up until a point at where a grant was coming in. I knew that I had the capability, as well as Tyree. He could go out and work as an electrician at any time, work three or four days. I knew I could get a job. I would be offered jobs on a weekly basis almost to go, to leave.

Probably the reason why I did go was that there was an opportunity to come to work here. The Office of Civil Rights here, unlike many of the other federal agencies, has a reputation of trying to enforce the law and doing a an effective job of it. Al Hicks had a reputation of trying to do a job and not bullshitting around with contractors. So that had something to do with it too. The other thing is that you know you just want—Sometimes you just have to get up and just get the pressure off of you, all of it, financial as well as the psychological aspects.

[00:57:17] **WILLIAM:** In other words, you reached a point of being very burned out.

[00:57:19] **HARLEY:** Yes. I had been there with Tyree. He's now working as an electrician, and he's still there with the organization, and that's no different. He also has four kids. I've seen the kind of sacrifices he's made, very costly sacrifices with respect to the relationship of growing up with those four kids, that can never be retrieved: the time that he's away from home, temporarily separated from his wife, the psychological problems that developed with the kids themselves, adolescence, and Tyree Scott in the paper every day, but they never saw him. That whole thing. He felt that. He knew that was happening, but he still stood up and did what he had to do. So it was really a draining kind of thing.

[00:58:40] **WILLIAM:** Yeah. That seems to be a good chapter. I'm going to have to deal with that.